

Nov. 19, 2015



## NEWS RELEASE

### **ALS Ice Bucket Challenge allows for historic research investment in Alberta**

Alberta – Nov. 19 – The amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) Society of Alberta is thrilled to announce that Dr. Sanjay Kalra, a neurologist and ALS specialist at the University of Alberta, has been named a recipient of The Arthur J. Hudson Translational Team Grant. This \$2.94 million investment will aid Dr. Kalra’s research team in the exploration of new high-powered MRI techniques that may be able to diagnose ALS earlier, monitor disease progression and determine treatment efficacy.

Dr. Kalra’s cross-Canada consortium will collaboratively investigate a way to monitor ALS through an advanced method of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). These high-powered MRIs will analyze the differences between people living with, and living without ALS in hopes of finding something significant that tells them apart. In addition, success in this study could improve the ability to diagnose the disease and will create a nationwide foundation for use of the technique.

“The Arthur J. Hudson Translational Team Grant encourages and enables researchers across Canada to work together to achieve the common goal of finding effective treatment faster for ALS,” said Dr. Sanjay Kalra. “The grant program, sponsored by ALS Canada with leveraging funds from Brain Canada, has been made possible by the generous donations of Canadians through the Ice Bucket Challenge and the WALKS for ALS. I have no doubt that this investment will lead to transformational discoveries in our understanding of ALS and ultimately effective treatments that will improve the lives of patients with ALS and their families.”

In 2014, the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge went viral across the world. Albertans raised a remarkable \$2.8 million for the ALS Society of Alberta during this social media campaign, of which \$2 million was invested in the national ALS Canada research program. Brain Canada then announced that it would match the funds raised for research during the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge, allowing for \$21.5 million to be invested in research across the country. One year later, the ALS Societies across Canada are pleased to announce that \$15 million has been invested in the most promising science to aid in accelerating the development of effective treatments for those affected by ALS.

“It is exciting to see cutting-edge research taking place right here in Alberta,” said Karen Caughey, Executive Director of the ALS Society of Alberta. “This substantial investment in research would not have been possible without the fundraising efforts of Albertans.”

The remaining \$800,000 raised during the Ice Bucket Challenge allowed the ALS Society of Alberta to respond to every request for support last year. This includes home visits, equipment rentals, support groups and support for children, offered to clients free of charge.

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**For more information please contact:**

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**What is ALS?**

ALS (*Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis*) is a rapid, always fatal, neurodegenerative disorder which is commonly known as Lou Gehrig's disease. It attacks the nerves of the body that are responsible for sending messages to the brain. This results in the gradual loss of muscle control, mobility and motor skills. In time, the individual with ALS is left completely immobilized, with loss of speech and eventually an inability to swallow and breathe. Approximately 3,000 Canadians live with ALS and two to three Canadians die every day of ALS. There is no known cause or cure for this devastating disease.

**ALS Society of Alberta**

The ALS Society of Alberta is a nonprofit organization dedicated to making each day the best possible day for people living with and affected by ALS. We achieve our vision by providing support, facilitating the provision of care, promoting awareness, helping find a cure and advocating for change.